

After Tito: No Soviet move seen

By Curtis Wilkie
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WASHINGTON — The United States is not "immediately concerned" that the Soviet Union will attempt to exploit President Josip Broz Tito's death by moving against Yugoslavia, a high government official said yesterday.

The Soviets would have to "pay too high a price" in world opinion to threaten Yugoslavia at this time, the official said. Intervention in Yugoslavia not only would harden opponents of the earlier Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the official said, but would also antagonize the Soviet's Eastern European allies located between the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia.

The official, who spoke with reporters at a luncheon meeting under ground rules that forbade his identification, also said there was a recognition that "the Yugoslavs are tough nuts."

Yugoslavia broke from the Soviet bloc in 1948 and established itself during Tito's rule as an autonomous communist country.

Though there has been speculation that the Soviets might move on Yugoslavia after Tito's passing, the official said that US intelligence indicated that the Soviet Union was far more "preoccupied" with China.

There is no evidence of any "startling" Soviet troop mobilizations along its border with China, the official said, but it is apparent that the Soviets have "a continuing, deep concern about China."

While minimizing the possibility of military action on Yugoslavia, the official characterized the conflict be-

tween Iran and Iraq as a "flash point" with potential for war. Animosity between the two countries "is as intense as it's been for a long time," he said.

However, the official — who is involved in evaluating foreign situations — said that both sides were restrained by their own strategic weaknesses. Iran's military is in "disarray," he said, while Iraq's oil fields are close to its Iranian border and vulnerable to an air attack. Iraq is hampered further, he said, because 50 percent of its population is composed of Shiite Moslems sympathetic to the revolution in Iran.

Asked about remarks made here earlier in the day by Lord Carrington, the British foreign minister, expressing concern over another Mideast blow-up if the Palestinian question could not be resolved, the American official said he felt Lord Carrington had "overdramatized" the situation.

"He has his own interest for putting emphasis on it," the official said, noting that the United States' European allies "now realize the Mideast is in their vital interest."